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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES AND WAYS AND MEANS WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Report of the Secretary-General

GE. 91-10547

1 The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 6 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/48 of 25 May 1990, entitled "Enlargement of the Commission on Human Rights and the further promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms", in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the organizational implications of that resolution for consideration by the Commission on Human Rights at its forty-seventh session. By the same provision, the Council requested the Commission to submit its observations to it at its first regular session of 1991.

2 The General Assembly, by its resolution 44/167 of 15 December 1989, decided to recommend that the Economic and Social Council take the necessary steps, at its first regular session of 1990, to expand the membership of the Commission on Human Rights, on the basis of the principle of equitable geographical distribution, for the further promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms; called upon the Economic and Social Council to conclude deliberations on this question with urgency; and requested the Commission on Human Rights to examine ways and means of making its work more effective and to submit its recommendations thereon to the Economic and Social Council. In accordance with the foregoing request the Commission on Human Rights adopted decision 1990/115 at its forty-sixth session.

3 By Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/48, the Council decided to increase the membership of the Commission on Human Rights to fifty-three and to allocate the ten additional seats among the regional groups of Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean on the basis of the principle of equitable geographical distribution; further decided that the enlarged membership of the Commission on Human Rights shall be elected in 1991 and that the following provisions shall take effect at the forty-eighth session of the Commission; authorized the Commission on Human Rights to meet exceptionally between its regular sessions, provided that a majority of States members of the Commission so agree; and decided that in the week following the session of the Commission on Human Rights, the Bureau shall meet to make suggestions about the organization of work of the Commission, including the effective use of conference time and facilities.

4 By the same resolution the Council recommended that the mandates of the thematic rapporteurs and working groups established or to be established by the Commission should be of three years' duration, unless otherwise decided, requested the Secretary-General to provide the rapporteurs and working groups with all the assistance necessary to carry out their mandates in the best possible conditions, and called on all Governments to co-operate fully with them and to support and promote their activities by ensuring unhampered access to all relevant sources of information.

5 The resolution would imply some increase in the resources normally allocated to the Commission on Human Rights, particularly with regard to the reimbursement of travel, enhanced conference services and the need for additional meeting time. It may be useful at this point to consider the introduction of electronic voting in the Commission, given that in the last three sessions of the Commission approximately two and a half working

days have been spent on roll-call votes alone. It may also be useful to note that, with the allocation of extra meetings, the Commission is already using more time than that allocated to it. It may be recalled that in 1979, the last time the membership of the Commission was enlarged, the meeting time of the Commission was increased from four to six weeks.

6 In paragraph 5 of its resolution 1990/48, the Council decided that, in the week following the session of the Commission on Human Rights, the Bureau should meet to make suggestions about the organization of the work of the Commission, including the effective use of conference time and facilities. This decision in itself will require the allocation of meeting and conference services, as well as resources for Secretariat servicing.

7 In paragraph 3 of its resolution 1990/48, the Economic and Social Council authorized the Commission on Human Rights to meet exceptionally between its regular sessions, provided that a majority of States members of the Commission so agree.

8 This also would entail the provision of conference facilities for a meeting of the Commission, as well as the appropriate budgetary allocation for the travel of one representative of each of the member delegations of the Commission, and necessary Secretariat resources. The travel expenses of one representative of each of the members will have to be reimbursed. The allocation of adequate resources will be necessary to provide the appropriate level of documentation and staff servicing.

9 The timely submission of documents of the Commission on Human Rights to the Economic and Social Council has consistently presented problems; this is because the meeting of the Economic and Social Council begins shortly after the Commission on Human Rights concludes its session. The implementation of the terms of Council resolution 1990/48 will exacerbate these problems. It would therefore appear to be prudent to give some consideration to the calendar as of 1992.